

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Bob Latta  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology  
“Protecting Consumers and Competition: An Examination of the  
T-Mobile and Sprint Merger”  
February 13, 2019**

*As Prepared for Delivery*

Good morning, and welcome to our panel of witnesses. Thank you for making the time to be here today. I look forward to hearing your expertise and different perspectives as we discuss the future of the telecommunications marketplace and learn more about the proposed merger of T-Mobile and Sprint.

With any talk of a merger comes a long list of potential benefits and drawbacks, and this one is no different. I understand from the CEOs of T-Mobile and Sprint, who are here with us today, that there are many pro-consumer outcomes possible if the merger is approved. These potential benefits range from providing mobile broadband to millions of unserved or underserved Americans living in rural areas to helping the United States win the global competitiveness race to 5G. But, I also understand from several of the other witnesses representing groups here today that the combined company could pose some harm to consumers. Some of these potential drawbacks include the possibility to eliminate jobs or increase the price that consumers pay for access to wireless service.

Our role on this subcommittee is not to weigh the merits of these arguments and determine if this merger is in the public interest. Congress gave that role to the FCC who, along with DOJ, performs a more traditional antitrust assessment on the merger, and these two agencies will ultimately determine if the merger is approved.

Our role on this subcommittee is to promote policies that advance the telecommunications market, including expanding access to broadband to *all* Americans. One way to do this, especially for rural America and many areas in my district, is to build 5G networks. In areas where broadband is not currently deployed, 5G networks can help connect Americans to high-speed Internet for the first time. And, in areas where broadband is already available, 5G networks will provide a competitive alternative.

This proposed merger reportedly will promote those objectives, and I look forward to hearing more about the ways in which the companies plan on doing that. But, I am also interested in learning about some of the potential unintended consequences of the merger. This will be an enlightening discussion, **but that is all it will be**. The final decision about whether this proposed merger of these two companies is in the public interest is up to the FCC.

I look forward to hearing your testimony and responses to our questions.